



## Editorial

**Norman Goldstein MD**  
**Editor, Hawaii Medical Journal**

### This Issue

The primary authors of the two manuscripts in this issue are both physicians and attorneys as well as prolific writers.

The first manuscript reports on a small, influential group of subjects, including our Governor, some of his Cabinet members, a legislator, some business, political and community leaders and their diets.

Terry Shintani, MD, JD, MPH and his associates report an ad libitum high carbohydrate, low-fat, multi-cultural diet. The study lasted only three weeks but showed significant weight loss, reduction in systolic hypertension, total cholesterol, LDL and serum glucose. The Hawaii Diet, a part of the Hawaii Health Initiative, hopes it will prolong life even more in Hawaii, making us, as Governor Cayetano proposed, "the Healthy State."

In the next manuscript, S.Y. Tan MD, JD and medical student, L. Tungpalan review the Do Not Resuscitate policies in Hawaii hospital operating rooms. This is a very important subject and as our population ages in our Healthy State, it will be even more important. The authors offer some key guidelines including:

Overriding a patient's Do Not Resuscitate wishes may violate the right to self-determination, thus DNR orders should not be automatically suspended in the operating room.

Any changes in the patients Do Not Resuscitate wishes must be decided by the troika of the surgeon, anesthesiologist and patient.

The Journal thanks S.Y. for another significant ethical contribution and for completing a four-year term as Governor of the Hawaii Chapter of the American College of Physicians. The annual program, held Feb 9 and 10 in Honolulu, presented papers in various subspecialties of internal medicine, with a discussion by Jim Pietsch JD, co-author of the Elder Law Hawaii Handbook<sup>1</sup> on Living Wills and Advanced Directives; the report by President-elect William Hall MD, FACP on the ACP-ASIM College; and 32 Poster Presentations.

Look for some of the excellent papers and poster presentations in a future Special issue of the Journal.

### Regular Columns

Henry Yokoyama MD is once again writing his ever-popular News and Notes. Glad to have you back again, Henry.

We also present two new columns.

Edwin C. Cadman MD, Dean of the John A. Burns School of Medicine, has already had great influence on medicine in Hawaii since joining the School in November 1999. Look for exciting activities, and plans for the future in Dean Cadman's column.

Carl-Wilhelm Vogel MD, PhD, Director of the Cancer Research Center in Hawaii, has also accepted a regular column, to be labeled "Cancer Center Hotline." There is much activity at the Center, as Gladys Brandt, the Board Member of the Friends of the Hawaii's Cancer Research Center points out, "the center is one of Hawaii's best-kept secrets." Thank you, Carl, for sharing you "secrets" with us.



## Letter to the Editor

Dear Norm,

*Years ago, you had something in the HMJ - or one of your lectures - it was re: one's receptionist - and you said that "she should have flowers in her voice." Do you remember that? I clipped it and kept it on my desk for years - finally, I have such a receptionist - she has one or two flaws - like showing up for work at the last minute - but the patients love her - and she loves them she really does - the other day Andy - a 21 yo with lamellar ichthyosis who works in a lumber yard had heat stroke and his mother called to say he was being rushed to the ER unresponsive - actually he did fine - but Corinne took the call and came into my room crying to tell me...*

### Random Tulips

Our local hospice has this letterhead on its stationary - "Practice Random Acts of Kindness." Although I'd seen the phrase before, I never considered how powerful these might be, until I witnessed such a random act.

Mrs. M. has been my patient for over two years. At 89 pounds, she's a shy, secretive, diminutive 79 year-old grandmother who carries the cross of parasitophobia - a strange malady which manifests itself in the delusional belief that one's skin is infested with various types of bugs; in her case mites. No amount of reasoning will relieve these patients from their convictions.

Drug therapy with a number of neuroleptics is helpful, but these medications have significant side-effects and many of these patients prefer to endure their disease, which after all may serve some purposes.

On Good Friday, Mrs. M. looked particularly glum as she sat in the waiting room. Maybe it was the Spring-time weather. As I looked at her, I mused, "Winter kept us warm." Corinne my secretary, had brought Mrs. M. a joyous pot of tulips to commemorate the holiday, but had not yet given it to her. These bright flowers on their proud green stems were practically smiling on their own. This gesture of beauty and simplicity touched Mrs. M. who a few minutes later, when she entered my consultation room, beamed with pleasure as she told me how much Corinne meant to her; how much her caring mattered.

I'd been preparing a talk on Spirituality and Medicine, and asked Mrs. M. "Are you religious?" She said no, she didn't go to church any more, but had a strong belief in God. I asked her if she prayed, and she said yes, daily. She prays for health and for her daughter and grandchildren. Was she disappointed that God had not cured her of her parasites? No. She is being punished for things she has done.

- 1). An abortion in her early 20's.
- 2). A brief impulsive marriage during WWII.
- 3). Her absence, due to illness, at the funeral of her estranged second husband.

Why, would God punish her so cruelly for those acts? Others do far worse things. Indeed, people in the Bible did worse, and were saved. Was it possible that it was not God who was punishing her, but that she was inflicting this plague of parasites on herself? She thought for a few seconds, then said, "You know, I've never thought about that. No, I don't think so."

I asked her if she'd speak to a clergyman or woman. No, that was

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1. Pietsch JH and Lee LH. *The Elder Law Hawaii Handbook Protecting Your Health Wealth and Personal Wishes*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press; 1998.

may be as high as 38%. The breast cancer may coexist with the papilloma or develop subsequent to its excision.<sup>5,14,17,19,20,21</sup> Although cancers may arise within the papilloma, the general consensus is that the cancers arise within the adjacent hyperplastic epithelium. Current treatment recommendations include breast conservation with complete local excision and lifelong follow-up. The local recurrence rates after resection may be as high as 24%.<sup>22</sup>

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impossible. I guess she's come into an equilibrium with the parasites. Perhaps they are a penance that she is willing to bear.

But in her drab, foreboding world there are now tulips, and the love they stand for will last far longer than their ephemeral blooms. I recognized now that these blooms are more important than all my insights and groping theories. The tulips came from the heart of a caring person as a gift to one in pain; and that is far more of an anodyne than by insight-oriented therapy or mind-numbing drugs. If there is to be a cure for Mrs. M. and so many more like her, it is more apt to come from another's heart, from a random act of kindness, than from some physician's head.

The question is, can this be taught? Or is it innate, a gift of genes and nurture. Sadly, those who enter medical school with this aptitude often lose it in the "educational" process.\

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## Editor's Note:

David J. Elpern, MD majored in comparative Literature at Columbia College and earned his Medical Degree at New York University School of Medicine in 1970. He was in general practice for four years before completing his dermatology residency at Johns Hopkins. Many readers will remember David when he practiced dermatology on the island of Kauai and was the Director of the Kauai Skin Cancer Registry.

For more than 20 years, David has had a special interest in medical education. He has organized an annual national Continuing Medical Education course in Dermatology "Hot Spots in Dermatology" as well as symposium on the medical humanities for the past 10 years. The next "Hot Spots" is planned for August 2001 on the Big Island of Hawaii. He is also organizing a conference to be held in Cuba in January 2002. David can be contacted via fax at (413) 458-4224 and on the Web at [kauai@bcn.net](mailto:kauai@bcn.net).

**Until there's a cure, there's the American Diabetes Association.**

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